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SPB POST PROJECT EVALUATION FOR THE BANKHEAD NATIONAL FOREST IN ALABAMA

INTRODUCTION

The project on the Bankhead National Forest was initiated during the spring of 1979. At this time, the southern pine beetle (SPB), Dendroctonus frontalis Zimmerman, was still in the winter stage of activity. This is exhibited by attacks being found higher on the bole of the tree and slower rates of spot growth. These factors prohibited analysis by procedures which are normally used during the summer mode of the beetles activity. A project was formulated based on the large numbers of overwintering "brood" trees in which the SPB were found.

TARGETS

Targets designated were 65,000 acres of presuppression flights and 1,428.3 thousand board feet (MBF) of timber to be salvaged. No chemical control was planned since it was felt that salvage efforts would be the most beneficial from efficiency and environmental standpoints.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The need for control exceeded expectations by a factor of 3.73. There were 5,332 MBF of timber logged vs 1,428.3 MBF planned in the project. SPB project monies were supplemented by salvage sale funds held by the National Forest for that purpose.

Ninety-two spots were found on the initial presuppression flight. Flights were made at 3-week intervals (11 flights total May-September) and large spots were given the highest priority for salvage. Salvage operations started almost immediately after the evaluation and are still in progress at this time. Several spots have not been treated in wilderness areas, proposed wilderness areas, and on some private land.

Problems encountered were minor, with the exception of the pulpwood market. There is very little market for pulpwood-size trees and the districts (Black Warrior and Bankhead) have difficulty in selling large quotas of this size timber. The FY 80 project has added cut-and-leave as a summer control tactic which should enable the districts to treat the smaller infestations in pulpwood-size timber.

Aerial surveillance in the form of presuppression flights has been adequate for both districts. Each district has at least one well-trained observer and are working to train others.

SUMMARY

The project exceeded all targets and reduced losses to SPB. The pulpwood market is a problem and will continue to be until a mill of sufficient size to impact the market is built in the area. Presuppression efforts are adequate and continuing to improve. There needs to be an effort to issue Federal certification for the application of pesticides. Should the need arise, there is only one person certified for pesticide application on the National Forests in Alabama.

Improved winter mode prediction technology is needed so that more realistic project accomplishment targets can be set and planned for.